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QUARTERLY JOURNAL

OF THE

STATISTICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

JANUARY, 1840.

On the Decline of Popular Instruction in Belgium. By Rawson W. RAWSON, Esq., Honorary Secretary to the Statistical Society of London.

[*Read before the Statistical Society of London, 18th November, 1839.*]

THE controversy which is at present going on in England with respect to the subject of the education of the people is fraught with important consequences to the future prosperity of the nation. It is with nations as with individuals. If the bodily powers of a man are alone exercised and matured, without a corresponding development of his mental faculties, there is great danger of his mind being wholly engrossed with sensual ideas, and becoming gradually brutalised. So, if the material progress of a nation outstrip its mental cultivation, if manufactures and commerce, mechanical invention and physical science, riches and luxury make rapid strides, while education and religion, which supply the moral training of the people, creep on but slowly, the result will ultimately prove fatal to the welfare of the community. Experience has shown this to be true. Nation after nation has fallen from the summit of glory in consequence of this neglect. Greece, Rome, and Spain, have each in their turn sunk, gorged with wealth and power, into moral blindness and decrepitude, and have been hurled from the proud station which they once occupied in the scale of nations. It behoves us to profit by such lessons. England has for years been making a remarkable progress in all that relates to its material condition. The application of steam to the purposes of navigation and manufactures has alone effected a revolution, not only in all commercial arrangements and mechanical processes, but in the habits and social state of large classes of the people. It has created among them the necessity for constant movement, constant progress, and incessant exertion. The factory wheel sleeps not, and the steam-vessel goes and returns without delay, and without irregularity. This excitement, or constant state of action, has extended itself, more or less, to all classes. Men engaged in business or labour, and how few in this country are exempt from both, have little or no time for rest or reflection. The merchant and the tradesman are constantly occupied in the hurry of speculation, or the routine of business. The artisan and the labourer toil without intermission to gain a scanty subsistence. In fact, the present characteristic of the nation is *movement*. This may not appear so obvious to Englishmen themselves, and particularly to those who have not witnessed the difference observable in other countries: but it strikes foreigners visiting England with amazement, and is one of the most remarkable points of contrast between this and other European countries. The United States of America resemble England in this respect. There the material energies of

the nation are in full play, and perhaps the outward appearance of industry and activity is even greater than here. But there is one important difference between the two countries. The Americans have recognised the necessity of combining mental improvement with material progress, education with riches, civilisation at home with power abroad. Hence in the present early stage of their national existence, the States have undertaken as a duty the task of providing amply for the instruction of all classes of the people, and education advances there with a step no less rapid than the national wealth and greatness. The case is far otherwise with England. It is true that a great improvement has taken place within the last twenty years with respect to the number of children receiving instruction, but how great must have been the destitution at that time, when, even now, England ranks almost last in the scale of nations with regard to popular instruction, and when, to speak within bounds, two-fifths of the adult part of the nation are wholly without education, and an equal proportion of the rising generation is growing up in the same intellectual deprivation.*

* The following table is given by M. Dupetiaux in his work on Penitentiary Reform (Brussels, 1838, vol. iii. p. 80). Although the figures cannot be received as absolutely correct, since we know that, as regards England, the Returns made in 1833 are not worthy of confidence, yet there can be no doubt that the contrast between this country and the others preceding it, in which the records of popular instruction are carefully kept, exhibits a difference very unfavourable to the former.

Proportion of Persons attending Schools, to the Total Population.

1. State of Maine (1833)	. . . . .	One in	3
2. „ New Hampshire (1833)	. . . . .	„	3
3. „ New York (1834)	. . . . .	„	3·6
4. „ Massachusetts (1833)	. . . . .	„	4
5. „ Vermont (1831)	. . . . .	„	4
6. „ New England (1834)	. . . . .	„	4
7. „ Ohio (1833)	. . . . .	„	4
8. „ New Jersey . . . . .	. . . . .	„	5
9. Canton of Zurich (1832)	. . . . .	„	5
10. „ Argau (1832)	. . . . .	„	5·3
11. Kingdom of Saxony (1832)	. . . . .	„	5·5
12. Bohemia (1832)	. . . . .	„	5·7
13. Prussia (1831)	. . . . .	„	6
14. Canton of Vaud (1834)	. . . . .	„	6
15. Grand Duchy of Baden (1830)	. . . . .	„	6
16. Province of Drenthe (1835)	. . . . .	„	6
17. „ Overijssel (1835)	. . . . .	„	6·2
18. Canton of Neuchâtel (1832)	. . . . .	„	6·4
19. Friesland (1835)	. . . . .	„	6·8
20. Würtemberg (1830)	. . . . .	„	7
21. Denmark (1834)	. . . . .	„	7
22. Norway (1834)	. . . . .	„	7
23. Scotland (1834)	. . . . .	„	8
24. Bavaria (1831)	. . . . .	„	8
25. Holland (1835)	. . . . .	„	8·3
26. Pennsylvania . . . . .	. . . . .	„	9
27. Switzerland—Zurich, Berne, Basle, Schaffhausen, Argau, Vaud, Neuf- châtel, Geneva (1834)	. . . . .	„	9
28. Austria (1832)	. . . . .	„	10
29. Belgium (1836)	. . . . .	„	10
30. England (1833)	. . . . .	„	11
31. Lombardy (1832)	. . . . .	„	12·6
32. Ireland (1831)	. . . . .	„	13·2
33. France (1834)	. . . . .	„	13·3

We have advanced far beyond most other countries in manufactures, commerce, and the useful arts, but the mental and moral improvement of the people has not kept pace with our material progress. The most enlightened of our statesmen and philosophers have long been convinced of this fact, and have predicted the evils and danger which accompany such a state of things. We already witness some of the consequences in the lamentable outbreaks and destruction of property and life, which have occurred on almost every occasion in which temporary distress has pressed heavily upon the labouring classes, or imaginary grievances have aroused their discontent. We behold it in the machine breaking and incendiarism of 1830; in the riots at Bristol and Nottingham; in the cotton spinners' conspiracy at Glasgow; in the fanaticism of the Kentish peasantry; and lastly, in the revolutionary violence of Chartism. Such evils were long foreseen and predicted. But what steps were taken to avert them, what remedy was applied to the acknowledged disease? The state did not bestir itself; the Church remained inactive: it was left to two societies,—great and influential societies it must be admitted, but still wholly impotent for the object at which they aim,—to raise the nation from its debasement, and to supply a general and adequate system of sound education for the whole people. Such a task was, and ever must be, beyond their power. The question arises, to whom, or to what body does the duty belong? The thoughts of men naturally turn toward the state, or the Government as the representative of the state and its interests. But much prejudice exists against the assumption of this task by the Government. This is not the occasion nor the place to justify or to confute this prejudice, and the only object in alluding to it is to explain the motive for bringing the present paper before the Society. It appears to the author that the existing circumstances of Belgium, and the state of feeling in that country with regard to the subject of national education, have an important bearing upon the question now in agitation in England, and that if the experience of other nations be not entirely without value, it may be useful on the present occasion in determining the course which ought to be adopted in this country.

On the annexation of the Belgian provinces to Holland at the Peace, the Dutch system of national education was introduced into the former country. Committees were appointed in each province for the organization of public instruction; the poor were required to be taught gratuitously; inspectors of schools were nominated; and all teachers were obliged to undergo an examination, and to take out a certificate of qualification before they could enter upon their functions.* The state

* The system of inspection was very complete, and great powers were given to the inspectors, who, on the other hand, were subject to a rigid superintendence. Each province had a provincial commission for primary instruction, which was composed of all the inspectors of the different school districts into which the province was divided. These districts were never so extensive as a Belgian arrondissement, though somewhat larger than a canton. The inspectors were appointed and paid by the state on the nomination of the provincial commission. They resided in their district, within which they were at the head of primary instruction among all classes. Without them, no teacher, public or private, could receive his certificate, or obtain a situation. They were bound to visit each school in their districts, at least twice every year, and to ascertain that the general provisions of the law were observed in them. Thrice in the year they all assembled in the capital of the province, and held a conference which lasted for two or three weeks, and in

advanced funds, and required the communes to contribute for the erection of school-houses; it provided also from the general funds, or from those of the provinces, for the increase of the salaries, and for the pensions of teachers. A great impulse was consequently given to popular instruction. The number of schools and of scholars was increased; the methods of instruction were improved; the institution of a normal school at Lierre, of model schools, and of courses for instruction in the art of teaching in the principal cities; the formation of societies of teachers, and of circulating libraries for their use, with the establishment of public trials among candidates for the situation of teacher, were among the advantages arising from the Dutch system.

The revolution of 1830, by proclaiming the principle of freedom of teaching, suddenly snapped the spring which gave life and motion to this system. It was supposed, or alleged, that the Dutch Government abused its power, for the purpose of propagating Dutch and Protestant principles; that all liberty in matters of education was destroyed; and that religious bodies, who were unwilling to submit to the examination and formalities required from teachers, were prohibited from affording instruction to the people. It is not surprising that the Belgians, being for the most part of a different religious creed from the Dutch, and having little sympathy with their new rulers, should be jealous upon these points. The history of our own country affords too many examples of a similar feeling. The consequence was, that the Government of 1830 abandoned the power, together with the moral influence, exercised by the Dutch Government. The provincial committees for public instruction were too much identified with their originators to be continued without danger. The Government therefore commenced by depriving them of their power of coercion, confining their duties to the superintendence of the schools wholly or in part supported by the public treasury. They were not forbidden to grant diplomas, but the possession of a diploma was no longer required from teachers. Changes also were made among the school-inspectors, and the new officers who were appointed in the place of those removed, were nominated by the provincial states, an elective body, and subject to all the influences consequent upon that mode of constitution. After a while, however, the committees

which each inspector reported upon the state of his district, submitting any questions which required the consideration of the collective body. The provincial commission watched over the conduct of the inspectors, and prepared the annual report required by the Government, before whom they laid any recommendations for the improvement of the system of instruction within their province. At the head of all, under the minister, was a high functionary, the inspector-general of primary instruction. From time to time the government convoked a general assembly of inspectors at the Hague, to which each provincial commission sent a deputy. Thus the system was complete; each inspector directed his district; each provincial commission governed a province, and the general assembly superintended the whole; the inspectors were responsible to the provincial commissions, and the latter to the inspector-general and the minister.

With regard to teachers, every person desirous of entering into that profession was obliged to furnish testimonials as to his moral character, and to undergo an examination before the provincial commission. If found competent, he received a general certificate of capacity; but before he could receive an appointment as a public teacher, he was obliged to undergo a second trial by public competition with other candidates. If he desired to be a private teacher, he was required to obtain the sanction of the municipal authorities of the place at which he intended to reside.

were entirely suppressed by a decree of the Regent, the Government reserving to itself the right of inspecting the schools to which it contributes, in any manner it may prescribe. But of this right it has not hitherto availed itself. Thus at present there is no legislative enactment to regulate primary instruction in Belgium. The authority of the Government extends only to those schools, to the support of which it contributes, while the rest are abandoned to the control of individuals, or of the councils of the communes.

What has been the result of this new system, asks M. Ducpetiaux, from whose recent pamphlet* upon this subject we derive our information. Has it realised the expectations, and fulfilled the intentions of its promoters? M. Ducpetiaux expresses his regret that he cannot refer to official returns to answer this question. For the last nine years the Belgian Government has abstained from publishing any reports upon the condition of the schools in the kingdom, either because it has not succeeded in procuring the necessary information, or because it has not considered it expedient to call the attention of the public, and of the representatives of the people, to a subject which is no longer under their direction, and which may in some degree be said to be beyond their control. This defect is however supplied to a certain extent by the governors, and the permanent deputations of the provincial councils, in whose annual reports the state of public instruction in their respective provinces is succinctly stated. The following details, taken from the reports of last year, will serve to show the present state of each province in this respect, and the grounds upon which M. Ducpetiaux forms his conclusions upon the subject; while the accompanying opinions of the local authorities indicate very clearly the feeling of the Belgians with regard to the necessity of the interference of their Government for the improvement of the present system.

In *Brabant* the number of primary schools on the 1st of January, 1838, was 757, containing 62,206 scholars, viz.

In 8 towns	Schools 200	Scholars 16,087
In the Rural Communes in the Arrondissement of Brussels	,, 238	,, 19,284
In the Rural Communes in the Arrondissement of Louvain	,, 149	,, 12,668
In the Rural Communes in the Arrondissement of Nivelles	,, 170	,, 14,167
Total	757	62,206

The proportion of scholars to the total population is as 1 in 9·6 inhabitants. According to the above census there has been a decrease of 5 schools and 405 scholars in the whole province since the 1st of January, 1836. But the decrease, being confined to the towns and the arrondissement of Brussels, has been still greater in those parts, as there was an increase in the arrondissement of Louvain of 5 schools and 348 scholars, and in that of Nivelles of 275 scholars.

The result of an inquiry into the amount of instruction possessed by the militia of this province enrolled in 1838 exhibits a lamentable picture. Out of 5,873 young men who had completed the age of 18,

* Printed for private circulation, and entitled "*Quelques mots sur l'état actuel de l'instruction primaire en Belgique, et sur la nécessité de l'améliorer.*"

there were 3,105, or 53 in 100, who were wholly destitute of instruction. Among 4,161 in the arrondissements of Brussels and Nivelles, 908, or 22 in 100, could read, write, and calculate; 819, or 20 in 100, could read and write; and 291, or 7 in 100, could only read. The remaining 2,143, or 51 in 100 were uneducated. In the arrondissement of Louvain only two classes were formed, viz. those who had been to school, amounting to 750, and those who were wholly ignorant, amounting to 962, or 56 in 100. The opinion of the authors of the report upon this province is thus expressed: "Although there has been some progress since 1830, with respect to the number of schools and scholars, yet we cannot be blind to the fact that good methods of instruction are not at present so generally followed as at that period. In order to remedy this it will be necessary to educate competent teachers, and to offer them suitable encouragement."

The Returns for the province of *Antwerp* show that on the 1st February 1838 there were 355 primary schools in the province. At the same date in the preceding year there were 347—the number had therefore slightly increased during the year.

Of the 355 schools, 128 were communal, 54 mixed, and 173 were private. The total number of scholars was 35,371, which was 1,246 more than in 1837.

Independently of this number, there were 3,100 indigent children of both sexes attending the Sunday-schools at Antwerp; 383 in the schools attached to hospitals and other charitable establishments in the same city; 158 in the hospital-schools at Mechlin, and 174 in two boarding-schools and one girls' school in the convent at Hoogstraeten. The model-school for the manufacture of lace, founded at Antwerp by M. Kramp, must also be mentioned.

The two model primary schools, one at Antwerp and the other at Mechlin, are in a satisfactory condition; the first is attended by 237, and the latter by 139 pupils.

The proportion of scholars to the total population in this province may be estimated at 1 in 10 inhabitants.

The number of primary schools in *East Flanders* in 1837 was 775, of which 150 were in the towns, and 625 in the rural communes. The number of scholars in the former was 14,027, and in the latter 46,040, total 60,067, or about 1 in 12·7 of the population. The number of scholars in the model primary school was 160.

The course of instruction in the industrial school at Ghent, which is given in the evening, and only during the winter, was attended during the season of 1837-8 by about 160 persons, chiefly artisans and workmen. This establishment, which has only been four years in existence, has already produced great results. Four of the principal manufacturing establishments in the country are superintended by persons who have followed the course of instruction in this institution, and many others are under the management of its pupils.

The six Sunday-schools at Ghent contain at least 8,000 children of both sexes, and those of Alost, Dendermond, Grammont, St. Nicholas, Audenarde, and Renaix contain 6,962 more. There are 128 of these schools in the rural communes.

In *West Flanders* the number of schools on the 1st of January, 1838, was 585, of which 131 were in the towns, and 454 in the country. The

first were attended by 11,799, and the latter by 35,224, scholars ; total, 47,023. Comparing these numbers with the population, it appears that there is 1 school to 1,079 inhabitants, and 1 scholar in 13 inhabitants.

This proportion is far from being the same in all parts of the province. In the town of

Bruges	there is only 1 in 14 inhabitants.
Courtrai	,, 1 56
Menin	,, 1 18
Poperinghe	,, 1 36
Warneton	,, 1 20
Wervicq	,, 1 55

And in the arrondissements of

Thielt	,, 1 15
Roulers	,, 1 69

The authors of the Report state that "it is necessary to guard against entertaining an erroneous notion of the real situation of primary instruction in West Flanders. In a great number of schools this instruction is of little value ; the teachers persist in refusing to adopt a reasonable method, and they are generally without good elementary books. The zealous and competent teachers had entertained a hope that the new law respecting primary instruction would have the effect of improving their condition. But the delay which attends the publication of this law causes a sort of discouragement, particularly as the position of a teacher is really painful and precarious. The law should determine the duties which devolve upon the communal authorities with regard to primary instruction. It is absolutely necessary that the teacher should be in some degree sure of a future provision, if he be expected to devote himself with zeal and earnestness to his duties. Perhaps the want which is most sensibly felt in this province is that of a normal school, where instruction may be given to those who are intended for teachers in primary schools. The establishment of such a school would be a real benefit ; each commune might then hope to have in future a competent and enlightened person at the head of its school."

In the province of *Liege*, 36,807 out of 61,293 children, between the ages of 6 and 14, are attending the schools ; 24,486, therefore, or two-fifths, remain destitute of instruction. The proportion of scholars to the population is about 1 in 10.

The town of *Liege* has within a few years done much for the improvement of primary instruction. The successive establishment of an industrial school, of a normal school, and of several infant schools, bears testimony to the zeal of the authorities and of the citizens who second their efforts. The rural communes are not, however, in an equally creditable condition. Notwithstanding the funds applied to the augmentation of the salaries of teachers, and to the construction, repairs, and furnishing of school-houses, very unsatisfactory results have been obtained. The authors of the Report from this province state "that these measures have proved inefficacious ; they will not serve to rescue primary instruction in the rural districts from the state of languor and decay in which it is at present sunk ; in order to revive it, a good law upon education is wanting—a law which will force those communes which can afford it to establish schools, will render assistance to those poor communes which require it, and will, lastly, make the position of

teachers less precarious, and their provision for the future more secure. Such a law would be a benefit to the country : it has long been desired. Why, then, has it not yet been brought forward? Why is it that the legislature delays so long to accomplish that which it ought to consider its first duty?"

In order to remedy in some degree the evil pointed out, the provincial deputation proposes to grant assistance in future only to those teachers who shall have undergone an examination before a commission to be nominated for that purpose in each *arrondissement*, and shall have been declared the most deserving of this favour. It proposes also to establish public trials between the pupils in each *arrondissement*, in the manner already practised in Hainault. Both these propositions have been adopted by the provincial council in its last session.

The returns from the province of *Limburg* for the year 1838 do not state the number of scholars. In the preceding year they amounted to 32,289, or 1 scholar in 10·4 inhabitants. 11,183 francs, or 447*l.*, were divided among 151 teachers. The committees established by a regulation dated the 26th of October, 1836, have examined 80 teachers; of which number only 50 have been found to be possessed of the requisite amount of knowledge, and few of these have passed with distinction. The meetings of teachers, established in August 1837, have been attended by 185 persons, of whom 40 were pupils or under-masters.

In *Namur* the number of scholars on the 1st of January, 1837, was 33,567, of whom 19,105 were boys, and 14,462 were girls. The proportion to the population was 1 in 7. The number of scholars in 1838 cannot be stated, as the necessary information has not yet been transmitted to the provincial authorities.

According to the Report, "the state of primary instruction in this province continues to be satisfactory. The communes rival one another in zeal to furnish decent and wholesome school-rooms, and to procure good teachers. In several the scholars of different sexes are separated, and the girls are placed under the direction of female teachers. The hope which the teachers entertain of obtaining an increase of their salary from the provincial funds makes them redouble their exertions to place their schools on a good footing, and to produce the results which may reasonably be expected from their labours. Those teachers who are wanting in any branch of knowledge are acquiring it in the normal schools. It only remains to be desired that the legislature would soon fill up the blank which exists in our code upon the subject of primary and middling instruction, by supplying the country with a good law upon education."

In *Hainault*, the number of scholars in 1837 amounted to 66,425, or 1 in 9·5 inhabitants. The Report states that in 1838 there had been an increase of schools and scholars, but the number could not be exactly stated. The establishment of public trials between the pupils and between the teachers has generally afforded satisfactory results. The deputation states in its Report, "that, in order to fill up the remaining blanks which primary instruction still presents in this province, efforts have been made to arouse those communes which possess neither schools nor teachers to the fulfilment of the duty which is required of them by justice, morality and prudence, and which we hope will soon be imposed upon them by the law. These efforts, notwithstanding they were

actively prosecuted, have, unfortunately, met hitherto only with barren sympathy. The authorities of the communes, to whom applications were urgently addressed, acknowledge the advantages of popular instruction, and express their desire to forward our projects of improvement; but allege that, weak and isolated, without population, territory, or resources, it is impossible for them at present to support an increase of taxation."

The state of trance in which primary instruction was buried in the province of *Luxemburg* is no longer the same since the wise measures adopted by the provincial council have supplied the means of increasing the funds granted by the state for educational purposes. The communes which have partaken of these, redouble their exertions in order that the indulgence may be continued to them, and others follow their example from the desire to participate in it. The permanent schools, or such as are open throughout the year, are becoming more numerous; public trials are established to procure good teachers; the authorities in the communes are more liberal in their contributions for educational purposes; and many new school-houses have been erected. But, notwithstanding these efforts, the state of primary instruction in this province is far from satisfactory: if there are many schools and many scholars, there is, in general, little instruction; the masters, for the most part, teach only reading and a little writing.

The number of schools in 1836 was 865, and of scholars 45,259. In 1837 there were 831 schools, and 48,733 scholars. This exhibits a slight improvement. Of these schools 257, attended by 23,795 scholars, were permanent, and 574, with 24,938 scholars, were open only during five or six months, or even less.

The proportion of scholars to the population is 1 in 7·5 inhabitants; but more than one-half of the children who are receiving instruction only attend the schools for a few months, or even a few weeks, in the year.

With respect to the teachers, there are 457 out of 831 who receive a payment from some public fund. Of this number—

	172	receive	50 francs or less	= £2.
	81	,, from	50 to 100 fr.	= £2 to £4.
	125	,, ,,	100 to 300 fr.	= £4 to £12.
and only	79	,, above	300 fr.	= £12.

If it be true that good teachers are only to be found where they are assured of honourable subsistence, it may safely be said that good teachers are scarce, and that the instruction which the greater part of the children receive amounts to very little. As a further proof of this, it may be mentioned, that out of 253 teachers who were candidates at the trials in the month of May, 1838, in compliance with the resolution of the provincial council, only 103 were found competent to pass.

"However brilliant theories of education may be," says the deputation in its Report, "primary instruction requires a vigorous and systematic impulse, which should be derived from some higher authority than the communal councils. The intervention of the government and of the provincial authorities is absolutely necessary: it is time to arrest the emigration of good teachers; it is time to form new teachers and to render their condition supportable. This may be effected by grants from the state, wisely distributed, by an increase of the sums contributed by the communes, and by the foundation of normal schools."

The result of the foregoing statements is, that the number of scholars in primary schools in Belgium is as follows :—

In Brabant . . .	62,206	or 1 scholar in 9·6 inhabitants.
Antwerp . . .	35,371	,, 10
East Flanders . .	60,067	,, 12·7
West ditto . . .	47,023	,, 13·
Liege	36,807	,, 10·
Limburg	32,289	,, 10·4
Namur	33,567	,, 7·
Hainault	66,425	,, 9·5
Luxemburg . . .	48,733	,, 7·6
	<hr/>	
Total	422,488	,, 10

In 1826 there were 353,342 scholars out of a population of 3,771,623, which gave a proportion of 1 to 10·7; therefore, the number of scholars, in proportion to the population, has remained almost stationary during the last 12 years.

This number falls very far short of the number of children of an age to require primary instruction.

The population of Belgium amounted, on the 31st December, 1836, to 4,225,783. In treating of the question of education, these may be divided into four classes. The first consists of children under 2 years of age, who form the eighteenth part of the total population, or 234,766 infants. The second includes children above 2 years and under 6 years of age, who form about a-twelfth of the population, or 352,149. The third contains those from 6 to 15 years old, who comprise about a sixth of the whole, or 704,298. The adults above 15 form the fourth class, and amount to 2,934,570. With the first class we have nothing to do; their education should be entirely conducted by their mothers. The children in the second class, however, should, for the most part, attend infant-schools, for the purpose of preparing for the acquisition of elementary knowledge. These schools are as yet few in number, and exist only in some of the large towns, at Brussels, Ghent, Liege, Verviers, Mons, and Tournay. The number of scholars frequenting them does not exceed 2,000, which is scarcely a-hundredth part of the number which ought to attend them. The children in the third class ought all to attend the primary schools, but from the above statements it will be seen that only 422,488 out of 704,298, or 60 per cent. are attending any school. If it be considered that the above account of scholars includes not only those attending the primary schools, but also those attending the dame-schools, and even the Sunday-schools, and that a considerable portion of this number have not attained the age of 6, or have passed that of 15, we come to the painful but undeniable conclusion, that one-half of the children between 6 and 15, and two-thirds of those between 2 and 15, are wholly destitute of elementary instruction. The number receiving instruction at home are not counted, because they are so few; and because they are fully balanced by the children, who, although borne on the lists of the schools, attend irregularly, or who are reckoned more than once on the books of different kinds of schools.

It has already been shown that more than one-half of the young men of the age of 18, who were present at the drawing of the militia in 1838, could neither read nor write. Similar accounts cannot be furnished for

the other provinces ; but as there is reason to believe that the province of Brabant affords a favourable specimen of the whole country, the total number of adults (according to the same proportion) who are entirely devoid of instruction is 1,555,322. In order to lessen this enormous mass of ignorance, it would be necessary to attach an adult school to each primary school. No exact information can be given of the number of such schools at present in existence, but the inquiries of M. Ducpetiaux only enabled him to discover two, one at Liege, and one recently established at Brussels. The attendance in both amounted to between 300 and 400 persons.

If the number of children and adults who are destitute of instruction be added together, they will amount to 2,185,981 persons, or 55 in 100 of the population, exclusive of children under the age of 2 years.

Such are the figures of M. Ducpetiaux, and they are really startling ; but there is no reason to believe, from the thorough acquaintance which that gentleman has with the subject, and from the means which he possesses of obtaining correct information, that his statements are exaggerated.

With respect to the nature of the instruction given in the schools, the same complaint is made as in this country, that it is little adapted to the wants of the scholars, or to the objects at which it pretends to aim. It is generally confined to the arts of reading and writing, with sometimes a little arithmetic. In many schools the children are merely kept out of mischief while the parents are engaged in labour. The task of intellectual development and moral education is rarely attended to ; the instruction given is purely of a mechanical kind, and is addressed to the head instead of the heart ; it affords the instrument of knowledge without explaining the method of using it to advantage, and often increases the evil which it was intended to remedy.

Another defect of the schools is, that a large portion of them are only open during the winter, and it is at this season that the annual Returns are made up. In 1826, it was found that in the departments containing less than 6,000 inhabitants, more than one-half of the scholars absented themselves entirely during the summer ; and there is every reason to believe that no change has taken place in this respect since that period.

The instruction of girls is still more neglected than that of boys. Out of 421,303 scholars, on the 31st December, 1836, 235,731, or 56 in 100, were boys, and only 185,572, or 44 in 100, were girls. There is scarcely any distinction made in the instruction given to the two sexes ; the children are generally seated together, and receive the same lessons. Under the Dutch government, measures had been taken to encourage the training of good female teachers, but the institutions which were founded, and the projects which were framed, for this purpose were destroyed at the Revolution. The education of girls at present devolves almost entirely upon men, and no means are adopted to instruct them in those manual accomplishments which are indispensable to the female sex.

The number of schools and of scholars has somewhat increased since the Revolution ; but the number of good schools, and of good scholars, has decreased in a corresponding ratio. This double result is principally owing to two causes : first, the unlimited freedom of teaching,

which allows any individual, the ignorant as well as the instructed, to open a school in the same manner as a shop ; and secondly, the want of normal schools to form good teachers. In 1828 the number of teachers who possessed diplomas was 2,145, including 168 females, out of a total number of 4,030. According to the last returns the number of schools was 5,622. Allowing that, notwithstanding the numerous deaths and changes which have necessarily occurred during the last ten years, the number of teachers with diplomas is at present the same as in 1828, and reckoning only one teacher for each school, there will be 3,477 teachers of both sexes, or nearly two-thirds of the whole number whose capacity has not been legally attested.

The institutions supplementary to every good system of education have been generally neglected since the Revolution. The want of infant schools, and the almost total absence of adult and normal schools have already been noticed : the meetings of teachers, the establishment of libraries for their use, the institution of courses of instruction in the art of teaching which were established in the principal towns of the kingdom, have scarcely left traces of their existence in the most favoured localities ; all encouragement to improvement in the methods of teaching may be said to have disappeared ; the societies for elementary instruction founded in Luxemburg, Namur, and Hainault, have abandoned their useful labours ; provision for teachers and their families is left to chance and the caprice of the public ; the sums contributed by the government and the local authorities for public instruction are wholly inadequate for that purpose, and the inspection of the schools, which might easily have been modified and placed upon a more liberal footing, has been wholly abandoned, even in the schools which are maintained or assisted by the government.

Such are the fruits of the change of system in 1830. The abolition of the Dutch code, and the introduction of the principle of non-interference in the education of the people have retarded, instead of advancing, popular instruction. The experiment has been tried for nine years, and the facts above related sufficiently attest its signal failure. Of this the Belgians are themselves convinced ; and the provincial deputations, in their reports, do not attempt to conceal the fact : on the contrary, they call as loudly for the interference of the government, and for the introduction of a law to regulate public instruction, as they formerly exulted in the overthrow of the Dutch code. They have tried both systems, interference and non-interference, and now declare in favour of the former. The draft of a law has long been under the consideration of the Belgian Government, and the declarations of the provincial deputations will probably hasten its introduction. Many of the evils, which they deplore as the fruit of non-interference, exist in this country, sprung from the same causes, and producing the same effects. We are in a state very much resembling Belgium as regards popular instruction. We have always had liberty of teaching and freedom from inspection, but it has not raised us much above the level of that country, and our eyes are now opening to our destitution. The example of Belgium may perhaps be useful to us ; the Belgians, who have had experience of the system which we dread, beg that it may be restored to them ; and the freedom which we are unwilling to relinquish, they have found productive of evil in almost all its consequences.